Little Bird

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/25877119.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), America's Got Talent RPF
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Sofia Vergara, Simon Cowell, Howie Mandel, Mentions of - Character, Beverly Katz, Freddie Lounds, Margot Verger
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Music, Rock Band Bassist Will, Pretentious Harpsichordist Hannibal, AGT - Freeform, America's Got Talent AU, Simon Cowell - Freeform, SOFIA VERGARA - Freeform, Howie Mandel - Freeform, Judge Will Graham, slight hurt/comfort I guess?, all the feels here people, seriously get some tissues, foreknowledge of AGT not required, mostly - Freeform, hearing Sofia Vergara's voice in your head definitely helps though, Beverly Freddie and Margot are the rest of the band, Happy ending for these boys
Language:	English
Series:	Part 13 of Bellarai Write AU_gust 2020
Collections:	AUgust 2020
Stats:	Published: 2020-08-13 Words: 2,522 Chapters: 1/1

Little Bird

by BelladonnaWyck, raiast

Summary

“Next is Hannibal Lecter, plays an instrument. Up in sixty seconds.”

Will turns his gaze back to the massive stage. The audition round of the show is held in various locations all over the US, and Will is ninety percent sure they’re in New York City this week.

Notes

Day 13 of AU_Gust Prompts is: Rock Band

The Hannibal/AGT crossover no one asked for. This one hits you right in the feels but with a happy ending!

See the end of the work for more notes

Will has never cared for Simon Cowell, but when your agent tells you you're being offered a multi-million dollar contract to be a judge on *America's Got Talent* for two years, you take it no questions asked.

Not that Will needs the money, necessarily. But with the band on hiatus, his social media team deems it important to help him stay *relevant.* Fans can be so fickle when they don't get new content regularly. Or so Will's team seems to think. Will has always had the opposite sort of experience with fans of *Bluebird's Wife,* their fans always supportive and kind.

Will misses the weight of his bass in his hands, but he'll settle for watching other people perform for now, take a few minutes out of the spotlight to collect himself. His dad passing abruptly had been the final thing the band needed to admit it was time for a break. Nonstop touring for nearly a decade had left all of them with not much time for their families, and Will's loss had only shown a spotlight on that for the other members.

Bev, the lead singer, had eloped with Margot, their keyboardist, literal weeks after the hiatus was announced. And Freddie was off feeding social media with all the content they could possibly want.

Will is jerked back to the present moment by the static crackle of his earpiece as one of the set assistants informs them of the next act.

"Next is Hannibal Lecter, plays an instrument. Up in sixty seconds."

Will turns his gaze back to the massive stage. The audition round of the show is held in various locations all over the US, and Will is ninety percent sure they're in New York City this week. They've been in three other cities over the last two weeks, so he feels justified in the ten percent uncertainty.

A man in a ridiculous bespoke *plaid* suit steps out onto the empty stage with nothing but a single harpsichord in its center. He walks up to the mark, a microphone in his hand, long fingers draped elegantly around it.

"Welcome to *America's Got Talent,"* Sofia exclaims, always so excited for every new act. Her enthusiasm has slowly started to rub off, and Will shifts a little in his seat. "Tell us your name and your act!"

"Hello. I'm Hannibal, most recently residing in Baltimore for the last decade. I'm here this evening to play the harpsichord at the behest of a colleague."

Curious, so the man wasn't here on his own accord but at the suggestion of someone else. These types of auditions seem to be hit or miss so far, some of the contestants actually diamonds in the rough while others are being lied to by friends and family, bolstered by their enthusiasm and support when actually they have no true talent. Will immediately wonders which this man will be.

“Go ahead and play for us, then.” Simon sounds bored already, his bread and butter always having been on musical talent but more geared towards pop bands and singers.

Will taps his fingers against the top of the table and waits.

The man doesn’t reply again, simply walking to the harpsichord and taking a seat. There’s no pause before he begins playing,

It’s French, that much Will can pick up immediately. He thinks it’s something from D'anglebert’s Suite in G Major collection, but the sound in the auditorium isn’t as strong as it might be with a piano.

He presses his buzzer, the lack of emotional connection apparent and seeping into the entire experience for him. The man keeps playing for several seconds, and Will simply *must* stop him. The talent is there, sure. But it’s all technical skill and no emotion. He decides to say as much.

“Hannibal, was it? I think we can all agree you have a technical proficiency on your instrument, but I’m just not feeling it. The music is hollow, no emotion attached. It feels bland.” Will plays up the antagonism only slightly as he’s been instructed to for dramatic effect, but something about the man on stage keeps him from going overboard with it. He finds he wants to be honest, and wants the man’s honest playing in return.

“High praise coming from the bassist of a now defunct rock band,” the man quips back, and from anyone else it would be a scathing rebuke, a rude rebuttal. But from the man still sitting primly on his seat, body turned just slightly to view Will more clearly, it feels almost like an inside joke.

“It’s a *hiatus, not a breakup,”* Howie is quick to joke, the audience laughing along with him. Will smiles tightly, fingers curling against the table.

“Well, what did we say? Are we voting?” Sofia asks, and Will hesitates. He has a gut feeling about this guy, and he’s curious to see more.

“I’d like you to play something else. Something evocative; that brings up an emotion in you.” Will suggests, attention rapt on Hannibal as he seems to deliberate internally for several seconds.

After several moments of heavy silence, the man wets his lips and brings the mic close once more. “I have an original composition I could play.”

“We’d love to hear it,” Simon replies before Will can even open his mouth, eager to keep the ball rolling. He can’t say he blames him - they’ve been at this for hours already today with hours still ahead of them.

Hannibal nods and turns back toward the harpsichord. He spends a few moments in silence, head bowed with his only movement the steady rise and fall of his chest, and then he places his fingers to the keys and plays.

The melody starts off light and sweet, an airy, fluttery thing that makes Will's heart thrum in response. The trill of higher notes paints a benign, peaceful backdrop, which is why the sudden undernote of lower tones feels at once discordant and hazardous. Hannibal's hands spill down the keyboard, falling swiftly and striking each key with grim determination as the melody shudders and shrivels, morphs into something as deep and dark as the ocean's depths.

Will finally finds the fortitude to pull his gaze from the player's hands to his face and sees there everything that had been missing from his first audition. His mouth is set into a grim line, as it had been during his classical rendition, but he can see even from his distance that his low-lidded eyes are shining, and while his frame is stiff, Will can tell that it has nothing to do with the desire to keep a proper form while at the keyboard.

The heavy minor key makes Will's stomach clench, the chords growing violent - almost *volatile* - before ceasing completely. That the piece is being played on a harpsichord rather than a piano only drives home the ringing silence, no lingering notes to waver through the air thinly before ultimately dying.

After a breath, Hannibal's hands move once more, his shoulders falling and body swaying as the music moves through him. This third and, what Will has a feeling is, final act of the piece holds none of the high and bright notes of the first act. But while it shares the deep sharpness of the minor key as the second, it holds none of the chaotic franticness and anger. It's a somber farewell, bittersweet and heart-wrenching, and it's only when the final notes are struck and the hall falls silent once more that Will registers the dampness on his cheeks.

"Hannibal that was *beautiful,"* Sofia croons, breaking the thick *nothingness* that surrounds them in the absence of Hannibal's playing. "You wrote that yourself?" Hannibal gives a nod, and, having stepped away from the harpsichord to face them fully once more, Will can see that his own cheeks are glistening as well. "Will you tell us about it?"

The contestant swallows, his fingers clenching tightly around the mic in his grasp, and a moment later all emotion is shuttered from his expression, his voice even as he begins to recount his story. "When I was a child my country was war-torn. My family was well-to-do, but we were affected by the events nonetheless. I lost my parents and my -" Hannibal swallows again, blinking rapidly for a second before levelling the panel with an even gaze once more. "And my little sister. She...she was the brightest spot in my life. What she suffered -" Hannibal pauses again, jaw clenched tightly. "I can think of none so undeserving as her to meet the fate that befell her. I think of her...every day. Truly. Not a day goes by that she isn't with me. I carry her spirit and the burden of my failure to her every day."

Silence surrounds them once more, save the soft sniffle Will can hear from Sofia next to him. It's Simon that speaks first, a thick emotion in his voice that is so rarely present Will picks up on it immediately. "Well, I am sorry for your loss. To go through that at such a young age - how old were you?"

"I was eleven."

"Eleven," Simon repeats, and Will can tell his flabbergasted tone has nothing to do with the cameras trained on them. "To lose your family at eleven and pull yourself through, to overcome such hardship and tell yourself that you are going to keep moving forward despite

how easy it would be to *stop* shows that you are more than a victim of a terrible circumstance, you are a *survivor.* And *that* will get you far - not just in this competition, but in life, so well done."

"Hannibal, I -" Sofia sniffles again, her accent all the heavier for the tears that clog her throat. "I don't even know what to say to you right now. I can't imagine going through any of that *now,* but as a *child* I just -" Sofia pauses as her voice breaks, and a glance to his side sees the judge wiping at the tears falling down her cheeks as Simon extends a soothing hand to rub her back. "You have such talent, and more than that, you put your entire heart and soul into that piece and I could *feel* it. Does the song have a name?"

Hannibal hesitates for only a moment before he dips his head toward the mic. "Little Bird."

Will doesn't think even the mics pinned to their chests will pick up the soft, strangled sound that leaves Sofia's throat, but he hears it, and it rents a well of emotion open within his own chest.

"Was that your name for her?" She asks, and her tears fall anew when Hannibal nods his assent. "It was beautiful, Hannibal. Thank you so much for sharing that with us. I feel just *honored* by your presence here today."

"Hannibal, I just want it to be clear that we all understand; that first piece you were playing: technically? It was perfect. But that was just music. I had a feeling about you, which is why I wanted to hear something different. I knew there was something you were holding back and what you gave us in the second audition - there was no holding back. Sofia said it best," Will agrees, nodding to the sniffling judge beside him, "You gave us your heart and soul in that piece, poured every ounce of yourself into it."

"You played a lifetime of memories in a three minute song and I could *feel it.* I could feel the joy she brought, and the destruction that was wrought upon you, and the heartbreaking tentative notes of peace and acceptance you've managed to claw out of your grief over the long years of your life." Will pauses, his own voice growing thick as unexpected emotion for this stranger wells up within him. "I can't imagine overcoming the things you have, making a life for yourself the way you have, and it pains me to hear you so callously refer to your sister's death as *your failure,* because you've made it clear to a room full of strangers in a matter of minutes that she meant the absolute world to you."

"I can't change the past, and I can't take away your guilt or grief, but I *can* tell you that your sister?"

Will pauses, and Hannibal sees the invitation for what it is. "Mischa."

"I can tell you that Mischa would be *fucking* proud of where you are, *who* you are today. *And* I *can* do *this."* Will's hand darts forward, almost without thought, and slams down onto the golden buzzer at the center of the judge's table.

The entire auditorium is silent as a grave for a half second after the golden confetti starts streaming down from the ceiling, Hannibal somehow still looking as regal as ever, even with little bits of metallic colored paper clinging to his hair and suit.

Suddenly, the room is booming with sound, enthusiastic enough to rattle the floorboards beneath Will's feet. He can't help the smile that comes to his face, and he stands up to turn towards the crowd, throwing his arms up to encourage them to get *even louder.*

It's to the nearly cacophonous chorus of their chanting and applause that Will runs up the side of the stage and hops atop it, making his way to Hannibal. So far this season only Sofia has given a golden buzzer, and Will remembers she went up on the stage and hugged the contestant. Each member of the show goes through a screening process before being allowed to perform, and each of them has given written consent to be approached by the judges in just this scenario.

Even so, the moment is still thick with emotion and the tension is nearly enough to give Will pause. He fights through, smile still bright on his face as he opens his arms to Hannibal, giving him the option to accept the hug or not.

After barely a second Hannibal is enfolding Will in his arms, hugging him tightly. Will can feel the remnants of his tears smear against his cheek and into his hair as Hannibal curls around him, and it feels oddly familiar and like *home.*

He moves his arm to remove his earpiece, watching one of the PAs in the side stage wave frantically at him to put it back in, but he doesn't want what he's about to say to be heard by anyone else other than the man in front of him.

"Your playing was inspirational, Hannibal. Transcendent." His lips twist into a smirk as he continues. "But you'll want a lighter suit for the next show. I'll see you in Los Angeles."

When Hannibal pulls away he doesn't look offended, instead, his features have morphed into something happier and more open than Will has seen on him yet. With the sound of thousands of people cheering and the warmth of Hannibal's broad body pressed against him, Will can't help but consider how he might like to see what other looks he could pull from the man.

End Notes

Thanks for reading!

If you enjoy our collaborative works you should follow us on Twitter and Tumblr for all sorts of extra content and teasers!

We also have a Discord server where you can chat with us, throw us prompts, and post images/art inspired by our work! You may also catch a snippet or two of some WIPs! DM us on Twitter for details!

'Til next time! 💚 💜 BellaRai

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!